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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001263

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO NRC

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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [ENRG](#) [ETTC](#) [IN](#) [KNNP](#) [KSCA](#) [PREL](#) [TRGY](#) [TSPL](#) [NSSP](#)

SUBJECT: NRC COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD MEETS MEA JOINT  
SECRETARY, US AND CANADA, DR. S. JAISHANKAR

SIPDIS

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 1261

Classified By: DCM ROBERT BLAKE, REASON 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: In this February 11 meeting, NRC Commissioner Merrifield complimented Jaishankar about the accomplishments and maturity of the Indian nuclear power industry. "With regard to nuclear power," Merrifield said, "India can no longer be treated as a junior partner." Merrifield also highlighted the importance NRC assigns to activities of the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO). Jaishankar asked for forward thinkers in the U.S. to address the baggage and cobwebs that continue to burden the U.S.-Indian nuclear relationship and find common interests to bring back a natural relationship on nuclear issues. End summary.

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Accomplishments and Maturity of the Indian Nuclear Power Industry  
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2. (C) Commissioner Merrifield expressed satisfaction about the progress of the nuclear safety cooperation program with India and told Jaishankar that NRC would welcome AERB members to come to work "shoulder to shoulder" with NRC personnel on nuclear power regulatory matters and that NRC would make efforts to place AERB technical personnel in U.S. institutions. He expressed admiration for the facilities in Hall 7 at BARC as well as the maturity and accomplishments of the Indian nuclear power program. (Comment: Hall 7 is a high-bay facility that can accommodate large experimental set-ups which are as tall as a multi-story building and require substantial amounts of electrical power and water cooling to simulate the conditions that nuclear fuel rods encounter during operation in a Pressurized Heavy Water nuclear reactor. End comment.)

3. (C) Merrifield highlighted that Indian participation in WANO has given the worldwide nuclear industry an opportunity to understand the strengths of India's nuclear power program.

4. (C) With regard to nuclear power, Merrifield said, India can no longer be treated as a junior partner. As a regulator who has seen over 200 nuclear power plants, he knows about the comparative strengths of worldwide nuclear power programs. Upon returning to the U.S., Merrifield said he could articulate what he has seen in India.

5. (C) Merrifield told Jaishankar that he intends to go back to promote the usefulness in making progress with NSSP. Merrifield said that NRC considers collaborations in benchmarking of safety codes important and that the ability to move in this area is somewhat wrapped up with dialogue and progress on export control. Merrifield said that by returning to the U.S. better informed, he will be able to promote progress in NSSP so that U.S.-India collaborations in nuclear safety can move forward.

6. (C) The Commissioner told Jaishankar that given NRC views on the value of WANO, NRC will encourage WANO to issue timely invitations and that NRC will endeavor to assist Indian visitors seeking to obtain visas to attend WANO events in the United States. Through his interactions in India, Commissioner Merrifield said that he understands the visa issue much better and it is easier for NRC to facilitate the process when it has timely information it can act upon.

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A More Nuanced Approach to NSSP Would Be Helpful  
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7. (C) Jaishankar, expressing gratitude for NRC's attitude, said that while Commissioner Merrifield realizes the centrality of NSSP, the U.S. requires some forward thinkers to address the baggage and cobwebs that continue to burden the U.S.-India nuclear relationship. It is reasonable to expect, that given the current price of hydrocarbons, heavy investments in nuclear power in India are likely to continue.

In addition, investments in nuclear power in the United States could once again grow. The U.S. and India, thus, have common interests and some decisions to make on how to bring back to life a natural relationship. It is India's hope that the U.S. and India will be able to look at the nuclear relationship in a broader context.

18. (C) India is very cognizant of shared concerns of proliferation. In implementing export controls, India is not doing this for the U.S., as exports of sensitive materials and technologies are just as detrimental to India's interests as they are detrimental to U.S. interests.

19. (C) The U.S. and India need to take steps that demonstrate a shared purpose and India requests that the U.S. take a more nuanced approach. The Indians resent that the U.S. continues to express proliferation concerns with India, which has an "impeccable record," and that the U.S. continues to put India in the same light as countries whose records are poorer. In particular, grouping India with serial proliferators is incorrect and greatly unfair, Jaishankar concluded.

110. (C) Jaishankar indicated that improving the relationship takes parallel efforts in India as well as in the U.S. However, progress in NSSP requires support within the Indian nuclear establishment. Jaishankar remarked that in 1982 the challenges posed by supplies of fuel for the Tarapur nuclear power station seemed intractable. The lesson learned at that time was that when there is a desire to find a creative solution, a solution can indeed be found.

111. (C) In the context of the broader dialogue of the U.S.-India relationship, progress in NSSP requires that the constituencies in the technical community remain supportive. In this regard, India's space program has found much benefit from the NSSP. The Indian nuclear technical establishment is far more skeptical. For NSSP to succeed, it must be implemented in letter as well as in spirit. A generous approach is important and the human element is important. Barriers vitiate the atmosphere in which NSSP could blossom. When Indian scientists who want to attend international conferences are denied visas, implementation of NSSP suffers.

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Getting on With the NSSP  
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112. (C) Merrifield told Jaishankar that, in his view, there are two kinds of attorneys. One kind of attorney reads a contract line-by-line and word-by-word. Another kind tries to look at an agreement beyond the individual words and individual lines to develop a vision of the total significance of an agreement. Merrifield said that he, just as Jaishankar, wants dialogue and progress and wants to get beyond the baggage so the relationship can move forward.

113. (C) Merrifield told Jaishankar that with regard to NSSP, NRC's inputs are only in those matters that deal with nuclear safety. Through his interactions in India, Commissioner Merrifield said that he understands the visa issue much better and it is easier for NRC to facilitate the process when it has timely information it can act upon.

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Meeting Participants  
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114. (C) NRC Commissioner Jeffrey S. Merrifield  
NRC Deputy Director Margaret Doane  
DCM Robert Blake  
SciCouns Marco Di Capua  
Dr. S. Jaishankar, Joint, US and Canada, MEA  
Santosh Jha, Deputy Secretary, US and Canada, MEA  
115. K. Raghuraman, Head, International Studies, Department of Atomic Energy

115. (C) NRC Commissioner Merrifield cleared this cable.

116. (C) NRC Commissioner Merrifield also met Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran (Ref. A) and MEA Additional Secretary

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Meera Shankar (septel).  
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